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Office Memorandum · UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : CA - Mr. McConaughy
THRU : CA - David L. Osborn
FROM : CA - Stephen A. Comiskey SAC
DATE: November 16, 1955

SUBJECT: Alleged Increase in CAF Air Activity

With reference to the British claim that the CAF flew 40 sorties in January and 400 in October, I have checked the reports we have in the Department and find that in January there were about 746 sorties, all of which in theory or by description might have passed over the mainland or adjacent waters. I should guess -- and we have no way of telling accurately -- that perhaps 50% of these sorties were over the mainland or mainland waters. Many were undoubtedly over the Tachens and other offshore islands then in GRC possession. This information indicates the British figures for January are very far off in terms of the number of sorties flown. Our information is "noforn", but I think we could indicate to the British that their figures are not at all in agreement with data we have received.

In October the CAF flew approximately 325 missions (501 sorties) on patrol and reconnaisance, 59 miscellaneous missions (232 sorties) and 47 photo recon missions. The total number of sorties on these missions (we do not have the figures for all of the recon sorties) probably was in the neighborhood of 840 sorties, as compared with the figure of 746 for January. This represents a slight increase over January in terms of total sorties and probably in terms of overflights but nothing like the 10:1 ratio the British have given us.

In addition, the CAF flew about 256 additional sorties during October in connection with Exercise "Blue Sky". The "Blue Sky" exercises are apparently routine training exercises -- Number 14 just took place this month -- but I have not been able yet to learn whether these exercises take place only over Taiwan or whether they also take place over the mainland. At my request Defense is checking this point.

Judging from what I have read in the situation reports for the period of almost one year, it is my impression that the number of photo reconnaisance missions over the mainland has substantially increased from January until now. On such missions, however, a relatively small number of aircraft are involved. For example, in October there were 47 missions and perhaps 80 sorties.

I have not noticed any surprising increase in the number of other missions which might have overflown the mainland, but as the Chinese Communist air force has moved south -- as evidenced by the airfield construction program along

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along the coast -- I believe the CAF has found it necessary and prudent to make more overflights along the coast from Foochow to Canton than before. Such overflights, being closer to Hong Kong and more readily observed from there and by British shipping along the coast, have possibly given the UK an exaggerated idea of increased CAF air activity because the extent of former activity was not so clearly apparent. Also, as Taipei has mentioned, the modernization of the CAF undoubtedly has encouraged more aggressive patrol activities. Furthermore, the GRC evacuation of the Tachens and Nanchishan has made possible and the CC airfield construction program has stimulated increased Chinese Communist shipping along the eastern coast. CAF efforts to interdict such shipping -- not necessary in January -- may also have given the impression of greatly increased activity.

FE:CA:SAComiskey/eh